

ST. FURSEY'S ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND PARISH,
ST. FURSEY'S ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PARISH CHURCH,
YARMOUTH ROAD, STALHAM . NR12 9PG.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

JANUARY / 2023



*The Epiphany, or the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in
the Jordan (January 6th)*

Troparion

WHEN thou wast baptized in Jordan, O Lord, then
was made manifest the worship of the Trinity:
for the Voice of the Father bare witness to thee,
naming thee his beloved Son; and the Spirit in form
of a dove made good the certainty of his word. O
Christ our God, who wast manifested and hast
enlightened the world, glory be to thee.

BRITISH ORTHODOX SAINTS
 COMMEMORATED IN
 JANUARY.

- 01 Elvan and Mydwyn, Missionaries
 03 Fugatus and Damian, Missionaries
 06 Peter, Abbot of Canterbury
 07 Brannoc of Braunton, Monk
 08 Athelhelm, Archbishop of Canterbury
 Ethelbert, Bishop in Ireland*
 Pega, Anchoress
 Wulsin, Bishop of Sherborne
 09 Adrian, Abbot of Canterbury
 Berhtwald, Archbishop of Canterbury
 10 Sethrid, Abbess in France
 12 Benedict, Abbot of Wearmouth
 13 Kentigern (Mungo), Apostle of North-West England
 15 Ceolfwulf, King of Northumbria, Monk
 16 Fursey of East Anglia, Missionary
 17 Mildgyth, Virgin
 18 Wilfrid, Missionary and Martyr in Sweden*
 22 Berhtwald, Bishop of Ramsbury
 25 Sigebert, King of East Anglia, Martyr
 Thordgyth of Barking, Nun
 28 John the Wise of Malmesbury
 30 Bathild of Chelles, Queen*
 31 Adamnan of Coldingham, Monk
 Wilgils, Hermit

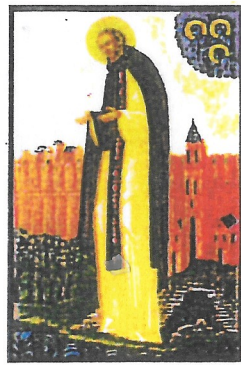
TROPARION OF ST. FURSEY.

Establishing thy monastery in a Roman fortress
 thou didst teach men that the Orthodox Faith is
 a true bastion against the onslaughts of every evil
 force O Father Fursey.

Where fore pray to God for us that we may all be
 bastions of the Faith standing firm against the rising
 tide of falsehood that our souls may be saved.

KONTAKION OF ST. FURSEY.

Thou didst need the walls of stone to defend the Faith
 against its pagan enemies, O Father Fursey, but pray
 for us that we may have a spiritual wall around us to
 defend the Faith against its enemies. Following thee
 and praising thy eternal memory we stand firm against
 every error ever singing; Rejoice beloved of God,
 our Father Fursey.



SERVICES IN JANUARY 2023

Sat Dec 31 st	Vespers 4pm.
Sun Jan 1 st	Circumcision of Our Lord St Basil the Great 379 Divine Liturgy 9:30am.
Thurs Jan 5 th	Vespers 4pm.
Fri Jan 6 th	The Theophany of Our Lord Great Blessing of the Waters Liturgy of St John Chrysostom 9:30am.
Sat Jan 7 th	(Christmas Vespers at Trunch 4pm – Ukrainian Orthodox Christmas).
Sun Jan 8 th	Sunday after Theophany Divine Liturgy 9:30am. Blessing of Stalham Staithe Waters 12:00 Noon
	PATRONAL FESTIVAL
Sat Jan 14 th	Vespers for St Fursey 4pm.
Sun Jan 15 th	Divine Liturgy for St Fursey 9:30am (At Burgh Castle circa 630-645 Died at Perrone France 650).
Sat Jan 21 st	Virgin Martyr Agnes 304 Rome Vespers 4pm.
Sun January 22 nd	Sunday of the Blind Man Divine Liturgy 9:30am.
Sat Jan 28 th	Vespers 4pm (St Ephraim 373)
Sun Jan 29 th	Sunday of Zacharias Divine Liturgy 9:30am.

Daily Services in St Fursey's Chapel (Neville Road) Sutton

In addition to the above services in the Parish Church we have daily services at St Fursey's Chapel in Neville Road, Sutton normally 3rd Hour 9am with Reading from the Fathers 9am Monday and Friday; at the Parish Church on Tuesday and Thursday – Daily VESPERS: 4pm.

THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS

It is the custom in the Orthodox for the faithful to have their homes blessed with Holy Water blessed at the Theophany Liturgy which commemorates the Baptism of Our Lord and reveals to us the Holy Trinity. If you would like your home blessed, please see Father Stephen.

CHRISTMAS THANKS

As I prepare this Newsletter of December 15th may I thank all those who have sent cards and donations. They are much appreciated.

CHRISMATIONS IN 2023

We hope to Chrismate Jane early in the New Year and William in the spring.

BIBLE STUDY

We expect to resume the Bible Study on Thursday evenings in February.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE NEW CHURCH IN 2023

Metropolitan Silouan hopes to come on Saturday February 25th to consecrate the church.

Every Blessing to our Readers

Father Stephen

THE ART OF PRAYER N^o 7

An Orthodox Anthology

Compiled by
IGUMEN CHARITON
OF VALAMO

Translated by
E. KADLOUBOVSKY
and
E. M. PALMER

Edited with an Introduction by
TIMOTHY WARE

(i) THE KINGDOM WITHIN US

The four steps of the ladder

Remember the wise teaching of St. John of the Ladder. He describes the way of our ascension to God in the form of a ladder with four steps. Some people, he says, tame their passions; others sing, that is, pray with their lips; the third practise inner prayer; finally the fourth rise to seeing visions. Those who want to ascend these four steps cannot begin from the top, but must start from the bottom; they must step onto the first rung and so ascend to the second, then to the third, and finally to the fourth. By this ladder everyone can ascend to heaven. First you must work on taming and reducing passions; then practise psalmody—in other words, attain the habit of oral prayer; after this, practise inner prayer; and so at last reach the step from which it is possible to ascend to visions. The first is the work of the novice; the second is the work of those who are progressing; the third, of those who have progressed to the end; and the fourth is reserved for those who have achieved perfection.

Merciless and ruthless towards ourselves

Giving yourself in prayerful surrender to God and His grace, call out each of the things that incite you to sin and try to turn your heart away from them, directing it towards their opposite. In this way they will be uprooted from the heart and their violence will subside. In this task give free scope to your power of discernment and lead your heart in its wake.

This struggle against the forces of evil is absolutely essential if we are to break our own will. It is necessary to go on working on ourselves in this way until, instead of self-pity, there is born in us mercilessness and ruthlessness towards ourselves, a desire to suffer, to torture ourselves, to tire out our soul and body. This must be continued until, instead of trying to please men, we form a feeling of repulsion against all bad habits and connections—until we form a hostile and fierce resistance against them, at the same time submitting ourselves to all the wrongs and disparagements which men inflict upon us. It is necessary to go on working until our appetite exclusively for things material, sensory, and visible disappears completely, and is replaced by a feeling of disgust for such things; and instead we begin to thirst and to search only for what is spiritual, pure, and divine. Instead of earthliness—the limitation of life and happiness solely to this earth—the heart comes to be filled with a sense of being but a pilgrim on earth, whose whole longing is for his heavenly home.

THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE

The protection of the virtues

He who is always at home within his own heart is a stranger to all the pleasures of this life. He walks in the Spirit, and so knows nothing of the lusts of the flesh. All the wiles of the demons against such a man remain ineffective, for he makes his way under the protection of the virtues, which stand as gatekeepers keeping guard over the city of purity.

ST. DIADOKHOS OF PHOTIKE

The three spiritual giants

If you wish to gain victory over the passions, enter within yourself through prayer and God's help; then descend into the depths of your heart and there track down these three powerful giants—forgetfulness, laziness, and ignorance. It is these three who uphold the ranks of our spiritual adversaries: supported by these three, all the other passions, returning to the heart, act, live, and gain strength in self-indulgent and uninstructed souls. But if by means of great attention and persistence of mind, and with help from above, you find those evil giants that are unbeknown to many, you will easily drive them away with the weapons of righteousness—with the remembrance of what is good, with the eagerness that spurs the soul to salvation, and with knowledge from heaven.

ST. MARK THE MONK¹

Only one way to begin—by taming the passions

There is only one way to begin: and that is by taming passions. These cannot be brought under control in the soul except by guarding the heart and by attention. Those, therefore, who pass through all these stages in due order, each in its own time, can, when the heart is cleansed from passions, devote themselves entirely and wholly to psalmody, and to fighting against thoughts; and they can look up towards heaven with their physical eyes or contemplate it with the spiritual eyes of the soul, praying aright in purity and truth.

THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE

Fighting Satan in the heart

The most important work that a spiritual wrestler can do, is to enter within the heart, there to fight Satan; to hate and repel the thoughts that he inspires and to wage war upon him.

ST. MAKARIOS OF EGYPT

I will rise up and go forth

After the initial awakening by grace, the first step belongs to man's free will. Exercising this free will, he journeys into himself in three ways. First, his will inclines towards good and chooses it. Secondly, it removes obstacles: in order to disrupt the ties which bind him to sin, it banishes from his heart self-pity, the desire to please men, the inclination towards things sensory and earthy, and in their stead it stirs up mercilessness to himself, absence of desire for things of the senses, acceptance of every kind of disgrace. It makes him feel that his true home lies in the world to come, whereas here he is but a wanderer and an exile. Thirdly, free will is inspired to start at once on the right path, permitting no self-indulgence, and making man hold himself constantly on the alert.

In this way everything calms down in the soul. Incited by grace, the man is freed from all shackles, and with complete readiness says to himself: I will rise up and go forth.

From this moment another movement starts in the soul—a movement towards God. Having mastered himself by understanding the motives of all his inclinations, thus regaining inner freedom, he must now sacrifice the whole of himself to God. Yet only half of the work has so far been achieved.

THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE

It is never worth while to lose your temper

On the face of it, there is nothing at all in the world over which it is worth losing our temper; for what is more valuable than the soul and its peace? This peace is destroyed by anger. When a man is angry, he assumes the rôle of a slanderer and fans the flames into a great blaze, in his imagination magnifying the offence of another. The reason for all this is that he does not keep his attention turned on himself—and so ill-feeling bursts out. Deep in the heart we cling to our right to judge and punish others for their sins, instead of ourselves. That is all there is to it. If a man saw himself as a sinner, being vividly conscious of all the consequences of sin, anger would be far from him.

THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE

Special investigators follow up on church attack in India

INDIA

Police in Sikh-majority Punjab state, India appointed a three-man special investigation team to look into an attack on a church in the Tarn Taran district.

Four masked men broke into the church building in

the village of Thakarpura on 30 August, taking a security guard hostage at gunpoint and tying his hands.

The intruders also vandalised church property and set the pastor's car on fire.

Several other anti-Christian attacks were reported in Punjab on 30-31 August.

Persecution of Christians by Sikhs is rare, however, and the Punjab authorities acted swiftly to protect the Christians. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said that the incident was "unpardonable", adding that the "severest action must be taken against the perpetrators of this heinous crime".

The Most Reverend PK Samantary, a senior church leader in Amritsar, Punjab, said that anti-Christian sentiment had been stoked by an earlier "reckless and completely unsubstantiated statement" by Giani Harpreet Singh, the

acting head priest (Jathedhar) of Akal Takht, the Sikh temple in Amritsar.

Giani had claimed that Christians, funded "by foreign forces", were seeking to gain converts from the Sikh and Hindu communities "by alluring them fraudulently". He has also called for Punjab – which is around 58% Sikh, 38% Hindu and less than 1.5% Christian – to adopt an anti-conversion law.

There is a growing number of Christian converts from Sikhism in the village of Thakarpura, but no evidence that any of these conversions were the result of force, fraud or allurements.



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann (pictured during his confirmation ceremony, March 2022) called for the "severest action" to be taken against the attackers

Libyan Christian convert sentenced to death for apostasy

LIBYA

A Christian convert from Islam has been sentenced to death by the Court of Appeal in Misrata, Libya.

The man became a Christian around four years ago, and has been arrested several times since then by Libyan militias who act as law enforcement in the disordered country.

The death sentence for apostasy was applied as a result of his refusal to return to Islam.

Libya's General National Congress (the GNC, which sat from 2012 to 2014) passed a law stating that apostates from Islam who refuse to recant will be sentenced to death. All laws passed by the GNC were subsequently abolished by its replacement, the Libyan House of Representatives.

However, the Libyan Supreme Court in Tripoli has ruled that the House of Representatives is illegal, allowing courts to continue to apply laws passed by the GNC, including the death penalty for apostasy.

The Maliki school of Sunni Islam – which is dominant in Libya – teaches that the death penalty is mandatory for sane adult male and female apostates from Islam and gives three days for the apostate to return to Islam.

Very few Islamic countries include the death penalty for apostasy in their national laws. Even those who have it rarely sentence anyone to death and of those who are sentenced very few have actually been executed.

Three "Chibok girls" found eight years after kidnapping

NIGERIA

Three Nigerian Christian women kidnapped as teenagers by Boko Haram Islamist terrorists from a school in Chibok town eight years ago have been found.

The Nigerian Army recovered them with their children during operations against Boko Haram in Borno State between 27 June and 25 July.

Ruth Bitrus, 24, and her child were rescued from the terrorists' camp in Sambisa Forest. Hanatu Musa, 26, and her two children, and Kauna

Luka, 25, with one child, were recovered in Bama Local Government Area.

Boko Haram abducted 276 girls, mostly Christian, from the Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok in April 2014. Around 165 girls have subsequently escaped, been rescued or released. Girls reported being whipped by their captors to force them into marriage, while a group of Christian girls experienced a mock execution for refusing to convert to Islam.



The three rescued Christian women with their children [Image credit: Vanguard]

THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD

Vespers

On Lord, I have cried, *eight stichera* are sung:

TO NE TWO

(by *John the Monk*)

The Forerunner beheld our Enlightenment, who has brought light to all mankind, draw near for baptism: and he rejoiced in soul while his hand trembled. And he shewed Him to the people, saying: 'Behold, the Redeemer of Israel, who sets us free from corruption.' O sinless Christ our God, glory to Thee (*twice*).

The hosts of angels were filled with fear, as they saw our Deliverer baptized by a servant and receiving witness through the coming of the Spirit. And the Father's voice was heard from on high: 'He upon whom the Forerunner lays his hand, the same is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'¹ O Christ our God, glory to Thee (*twice*).

The streams of the Jordan received Thee who art the fountain, and the Comforter descended in the form of a dove. He who bowed the heavens,² bowed His head, and the clay cried aloud to Him that formed him: 'Why dost Thou command of me what lies beyond my power? For I have need to be baptized of Thee.'³ O sinless Christ our God, glory to Thee (*twice*).

Wishing to save man gone astray, Thou hast not disdained to clothe Thyself in the form of a servant. For it befitted Thee, as Master and God, to take upon Thyself our nature for our sakes. For Thou, O Deliverer, hast been baptized in the flesh, making us worthy of forgiveness. Therefore we cry unto Thee: O Christ our God and Benefactor, glory to Thee (*twice*).

Glory be to the Father . . . Both now . . .

(by *Byzas*)

Thou hast bowed Thine head before the Forerunner and hast crushed the heads of the dragons.¹ Thou hast descended into the waters and hast given light to all things, that they may glorify Thee, O Saviour, the Enlightenment of our souls.

On the feast of the Savior's birth, the earth rejoiced because it bore the Lord in a manger; but on today's feast of the Epiphany it is the sea that is glad and leaps for joy; the sea is glad because it receives the blessing of holiness in the river Jordan.

At Christmas we saw a weak baby, giving proof of our weakness. In today's feast, we see a perfect man, hinting at the perfect Son who proceeds from the all-perfect Father. At Christmas the King puts on the royal robe of his body; at Epiphany the very source unfolds and, as it were, clothes the river.

Come then and see new and astounding miracles: the Sun of righteousness washing in the Jordan, fire immersed in water, God sanctified by the ministry of man.

Today every creature shouts in resounding song: *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*. Blessed is he who comes in every age, for this is not his first coming.

And who is he? Tell us more clearly, I beg you, blessed David: *The Lord is God and has shone upon us*. David is not alone in prophesying this; the apostle Paul adds his own witness, saying: *The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all men, and instructing us*. Not for some men, but for all. To Jews and Greeks alike God bestows salvation through baptism, offering baptism as a common grace for all.

Come, consider this new and wonderful deluge, greater and more important than the flood of Noah's day. Then the water of the flood destroyed the human race, but now the water of baptism has recalled the dead to life by the power of the one who was baptized. In the days of the flood the dove with an olive branch in its beak foreshadowed the fragrance of the good odor of Christ the Lord; now the Holy Spirit, coming in the likeness of a dove, reveals the Lord of mercy.

SELECTED LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

PETER OF CANTERBURY (d. 607), abbot. First abbot of St. Augustine's (then called SS. Peter and Paul), Peter was probably the monk of that name who was sent by *Augustine to give news of the first Anglo-Saxon conversions to *Gregory the Great and who brought back to England Gregory's replies to Augustine's questions. Peter was sent later on a mission to Gaul, but was drowned in the English Channel in the bay of Ambleteuse (Amfleet). The local inhabitants, according to Bede, buried him in an 'unworthy place' but, as the result of a prodigy of mysterious light appearing over his grave at night, translated his relics to a church in Boulogne with suitable honour. At St. Augustine's, Canterbury, his feast was kept on 30 December; other authorities give 6 January.

Bede, *H.E.*, i. 27, 33; *AA.SS. Ian.* I (1643), 334.

SIGEBERT (I) (d. 635), king of East Anglia and martyr. Virtually all we know of him comes from *Bede. During the reign of his predecessor Redwald (who had attempted to combine the worship of Christ with that of the Germanic gods in the same church), Sigebert went into exile in Frankia and became a Christian. He returned as king in 630, a very learned man (*doctissimus*), and with the help of Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury, introduced *Felix as bishop of East Anglia, based at Dunwich (or possibly Felixstowe) and enabled with royal endowment *Fursey to establish his monastery at Burgh Castle. Felix under royal patronage also set up schools in East Anglia.

Sigebert did not reign for long; he resigned in favour of Ecgric and became a monk, possibly at Burgh Castle. Meanwhile Penda, king of Mercia, the scourge of other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, made war on East Anglia. Sigebert's countrymen, fearful of the morale of the troops in battle, took him against his will out of his monastery and brought him to the army, hoping that the presence of one who had been a brave and famous general would allay their fears. He, however, refused to carry a weapon but only a staff. He was killed with Ecgric in the total defeat which followed. Sigebert, like some other Anglo-Saxon kings who died in battle, was venerated as a martyr. East Anglian liturgical books were destroyed in the Danish invasions and his feast has been variously assigned to 16 January and 27 September.

FURSEY (Fursa) (d. 650), Irish abbot or bishop. He became a monk in Ireland but left it as a 'pilgrim for Christ', coming to East Anglia c.630. King *Sigebert received him and his companions, especially *Foillan, kindly and gave them the old fortress of Cnobheresburg (Burgh Castle, Suffolk) with adjacent lands for a monastery. On the death of Sigebert in battle against Penda, king of Mercia, Fursey left for France. Again he was helped by a ruler, Erchinoald, mayor of Neustria, who gave him land for another monastery, which he built at Lagny-sur-Marne. He died at Mezerolles (Somme); his body was buried at Péronne (Picardy), afterwards called *Perrona Scottorum*, in another Irish monastery.

In 654 his relics were translated to a shrine 'in the shape of a little house', supposedly made by *Eloi. Another translation took place in 1056. Most of the relics remained until the French Revolution; a head reliquary survived even the Prussian bombardment of 1870. French, Irish, and English calendars (especially Canterbury, which claimed head-relics) attest his cult.

This was assisted by Bede's account of his vision of the after-life, one of the earliest of its kind. During a state of trance he saw visions of heaven and hell, angels and devils; on recovering he described his experiences and warned against future and detailed punishments for sins. Feast: 16 January.

AA.SS. Ian. II (1643), 35-55; Bede, *H.E.*, iii 19; *Vita Primu S. Fursei* in *M.G.H., Scriptores rerum inorov.* iv. 423-49; W. Stokes, 'Betha Fursa', *Revue Celtique*, xxv (1904), 385-404; J. Fiennig, 'The Irish Background of St. Fursey', *I.E.R.* (1952), 18-28.

PEGA (d. c.719), virgin, sister of *Guthlac. She lived as an anchoress at Peakirk (i.e. 'Pega's church') in Northamptonshire, not far from Guthlac's hermitage at Crowland. When he realized that his end was near (714), he invited her to his funeral. For this she sailed down the Welland, curing a blind man from Wisbech on the way. She inherited Guthlac's psalter and scourge, both of which, it was claimed, she later gave to Crowland. She went on pilgrimage to Rome and died there c.719. Ordericus Vitalis claimed that her relics survived in an unnamed Roman church in his day, and that miracles took place there. Feast: 8 January.